Chapter 1

Future Learning Spaces:
The Potential and Practice of Learning 2.0 in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Higher education institutions are promoting the integration of online technologies in teaching and learning as an attempt to provide flexible modes of delivery, to diversify the profile of students accessing higher education and to facilitate the development of life-long learning skills. The availability of personal digital devices, such as wireless laptops and mobile phones, and campus-wide Internet connectivity has the potential to enhance or detract from learning in higher education. This chapter explores the trend towards online learning in higher education, examining the potential of and current practices in the integration of Information and Communication Technologies, focusing on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in teaching and learning, and presenting some of the challenges that arise in the integration of online technologies and implementation of Learning 2.0 in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

ICT are key enablers for creating future learning spaces, although they are not the sole drivers. (Punie & Ala-Mutka, 2007, p.213)

The traditional notion of what constitutes learning spaces in higher education evokes images of lecture halls, chalkboards and lecture-dominated instruction for many. Teaching and learning processes and practices in higher education are evolving from this didactical institutional model towards a student-centered, active learning model. According to Ituma (2011), this shift towards a student-centered learning model is being facilitated by the integration of online learning in higher education' institutions.

Punie & Ala-Mutka (2007) present a vision of future learning spaces that integrate Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to enable

personal digital spaces for learners and educators, to connect the community of learners and to enable individual and collective knowledge construction and transformation. ICTs are critical in providing access to multiple perspectives, facilities to promote reflexivity, opportunities to rate, recommend or certify contributions from members of the learning community, and to motivate learners. They also can support the inclusion of learners of all ages with varying abilities, learning styles and learning preferences, as well as those from socio-economic disadvantaged backgrounds or with special needs. Online technologies in particular are perceived as a means to reduce costs whilst providing greater access and flexibility in the service of education.

Higher education institutions are promoting the integration of online technologies in teaching and learning in an attempt to provide flexible modes of delivery, to diversify the profile of students accessing higher education and to facilitate the development of life-long learning skills. This chapter explores the trend towards online learning in higher education, examining the potential of and current practices in the integration of ICTs. It focuses on the use of Web 2.0 technologies in teaching and learning, and presents some of the challenges that arise in integrating online technologies and implementing Learning 2.0 in higher education.

Trends in Online Education in Higher Education

Graetz (2006) commented that "campuses can expect the boundaries between virtual and brick-and-mortar learning environments to continue to blur" (p.72). The availability of personal digital devices, such as wireless laptops and mobile phones, and campus-wide Internet connectivity has the potential to enhance or detract from learning in higher education. In a report on the future of online teaching and learning in higher education, Kim & Bonk (2006) reported that

"online learning environments are now facing a "perfect e-storm," linking pedagogy, technology and learner needs" (p.22). The quality of learning and the creation of a meaningful learning experience must be central to the deployment of online technologies in higher education. Social media applications widely available on the Internet need to be carefully harnessed within face-to-face and online settings to engage learners individually and collaboratively in meaningful learning experiences and processes in higher education.

Courses within higher education are now delivered primarily in one or more of three modes, namely, face-to-face, blended and/ or online. The Sloan Report (Allen & Seaman, 2011, p.7) summarises each of these modes as follows:

- Face-to-face course delivery where up to 29% of the course may be delivered online. Thus, either no online technology is used in the delivery or communication of the course or web-based technologies (such as course management systems) are used as a basic repository for the course material.
- Blended course delivery where between 30-79% of the course learning is offered online, with the remainder being offered face-to-face. Blended learning offers a high degree of online engagement, through facilities such as discussion forums.
- Online course delivery offers a more immersed online experience, with at least 80% of the course content provided. Typically there is little or no face-to-face interaction.

Within institutions of Higher Education, there is varying levels of acceptance of the value and legitimacy of online education among management, staff and students. However, the move towards online education is very high in the United States. According to the Sloan 2011 Online Education Report (Allen & Seaman, 2011, p.8), online education is increasingly being rated

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